



INSIDE INDIA

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April 7 is World Health Day 2009: *Save lives. Make hospitals safe in emergencies*



First aid skills being practiced at a disaster drill in Assam.
Photo: Nilu Sayal/USAID

Every year since 1950, the World Health Organization (WHO) has celebrated April 7 as "World Health Day." The idea of World Health Day is to create "awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization (WHO)," with activities related to that particular theme continuing throughout the year. This year, World Health Day 2009 focuses on the safety of health facilities and the readiness of health workers who treat those affected by emergencies. When a natural or manmade disaster (earthquake, severe weather

event, disease outbreak, chemical spill, war, etc) occurs, most lives are lost or saved in the immediate aftermath of the event and people count on hospitals and health facilities to respond quickly and effectively. Hospitals, health centers, staff, and other first responders are the critical lifelines for vulnerable people in disasters - treating injuries, preventing illnesses, and still caring for people's routine health needs.

Because already fragile health systems are often unable to keep functioning through a disaster, WHO and international partners are underscoring the importance of investing in health infrastructure that can withstand hazards and serve people in immediate need. They are also urging health facilities to implement systems to respond to internal emergencies, such as fires, and ensure the continuity of care.

For the past six years USAID/India has been working with the Government of India on a remarkably strong and successful partnership designed to address the challenges of disaster mitigation and response, bringing a new vision for disaster management to India. Working with U.S. and Indian public and private institutions, the agency is facilitating the sharing of best practices, and building individual and institutional capacities of public and private hospitals, government departments and institutions, community volunteers, schools, and members of the disaster management teams in five disaster prone states of India.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Key activities include:

USAID/India has been supporting GeoHazards International, a nonprofit organization from California to build the capacity of the Delhi Public Works Department (Delhi PWD) to assess and seismically retrofit vulnerable existing buildings, especially those that have important post-earthquake functions. Retrofit is underway in two critical building complexes in Delhi including a hospital and a school.

Guru Tegh Bahadur (GTB) Hospital, a 1,000-bed hospital that provides healthcare to thousands of Delhi residents is undergoing earthquake retrofit. Though the site has many buildings, this project focused on the eight-story Ward Block and its connecting corridors. Once these retrofit measures are in place, the medical staff should be able to use the ward block, with minimal cleanup, shortly after an earthquake.

USAID/India has been working to raise awareness of earthquake risk and risk mitigation measures through sensitization sessions at hospitals, schools, museums, and professional associations. The program has sensitized over 3400 people, including 1,810 teachers, students, parents, and administrators; 780 doctors, nurses, administrators, and medical staff; 85 museum professionals; 180 government officials; 290 engineers and 120 building professionals.

In 2008, as part of a campaign to reduce earthquake risk in hospital facilities in Delhi, USAID/India also supported a workshop, "Integrating Earthquake Risk Mitigation into Hospital Facilities Planning," where more than 150 hospital and healthcare sector stakeholders from medical institutions in and around Delhi participated. At the workshop, top Indian and international experts conducted sessions on non-structural mitigation measures in hospital buildings, reviewed best-practice and looked at ways to ensure minimal disruption post-disaster, as well as seismic retrofitting in existing buildings.

25% of Multi-Drug Resistant TB Cases are in India

Last week, Health Ministers and senior officials from the top 27 high burden TB countries met in Beijing for a three-day meeting on Multi-drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB). This meeting follows the release of the World Health Organization's 2009 Global TB Report, which estimates that India is home to 130,000 of the half million cases of MDR-TB that developed in 2007. This now places India as the number one high burden country for MDR-TB.

USAID is focusing on MDR-TB as a critical priority in TB control by assisting the Government of India (GOI) to develop a national system of state-level laboratories for diagnosis of drug-resistant TB. USAID has established a lab strengthening taskforce, composed of strategically-placed individuals in key institutions, including: a laboratory accreditation coordination in the TB Research Centre, Chennai; a laboratory focal point in WHO's South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO); a laboratory specialist in the Central TB Division of the GOI's Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP); and international technical assistance from Supra-national Reference Laboratories. USAID is also providing technical assistance to build the capacity of individual state-level laboratories and establish demonstration sites for upgraded laboratory diagnostics and to conduct operations research related to MDR-TB.

Security Training for Survivors of Trafficking



Survivors of trafficking preparing to be security guards as part of innovative USAID training program. Photo: UNODC

As part of an anti-trafficking project, USAID/India and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have been working with the NGO Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) to train 30 young women as security guards in the state of Jharkhand. All of the girls are survivors of trafficking and they are undergoing a three month training program with the hope of finding a security job with a large corporation. All of the girls currently live in a BKS supported shelter, the only such shelter for women in the state of Jharkhand. BKS coordinates the Jharkhand Chapter of the Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) Network that advocates for protection

against trafficking and rehabilitation for survivors of trafficking, which has received support from USAID for capacity building activities.

This innovative vocational training program was introduced under the banner "A New Beginning," and for these young survivors of trafficking, many who have been rejected by their families and communities, the opportunity to earn a livelihood and regain their dignity and sense of control over their lives, is indeed a new beginning full of promise .

USAID Horticulture Supply Chain Software Recognized By NASSCOM for Innovation

FRESHConnect, USAID's innovative information communications technology (ICT) based solution for supply chain management in horticulture, was recently recognized by the National Association of Software and Services Companies when FRESH Connect partner Infosys Technologies was named a runner-up for the 2008 NASSCOM Innovation Award.

NASSCOM is the primary trade body and chamber of commerce of the Information Technology - Business Process Outsourcing (IT-BPO) industries in India and the award is a key NASSCOM initiative designed to highlight and encourage innovations in the Indian IT industry. FRESHConnect was nominated in the Business Innovation category, and, with other finalists, was recently showcased in road-shows throughout the country.

The FRESHConnect application allows small horticulture producers, extension agents, bulk buyers, and others involved in the supply chain to use mobile phones to get the best information available on crop planning, demand, and sales and for accessing real-time technical and market information and weather forecasts. R K Foodlands, a premier commercial buyer of horticulture products, is already using the application to plan and procure commodities from its farmer bases and other major retailers are interested in purchasing the FreshConnect software program.